

Interview for “Their Stories: Lowell’s Youth and The Refugee Experience”

Date: November 1, 2013

Place: International Institute, Lowell

Interviewee: Bo Meh (from Burma)

Interviewer: Stephanie Sullivan and Gyu Bin Lee, UMass Lowell students

(Recording 1)

Bo Meh: And I’m from Burma and right now I’m 19 years old.

Stephanie: Ok, thank you. So would you like to just tell us how... how you came about, how your family came about coming to the United States and what events lead up to that?

Bo Meh: We came to United States because of the Burmese government, I mean like they ruled the people like a... I don’t know how to say. They controlled the people’s human right and and then... I don’t know.

Stephanie: You were originally born in Thailand, right? so you are born in Thailand and what age did you come over, did you go to umm... you are from Burma and you went to Thailand, so what age did you leave Burma?

Bo Meh: Uh... I don’t remember because like I was 2 years, I don’t remember.

Stephanie: So you were 2 years old when you left Burma and then you lived in Thailand. So how long did you live in Thailand?

Bo Meh: It’s like a 14 years.

Stephanie: 14?

Bo Meh: Yeah.

Stephanie: Wow.

Bo Meh: And then I come here after.

Stephanie: Ok, so at what age then did you came to the United States?

Bo Meh: Uh... I’m sorry?

Stephanie: How old were you when you came to the United States?

Bo Meh: I was 17 years old when I came to United States.

Stephanie: Wow. So how did you change after you came to the United States?

Bo Meh: Yeah, I changed a lot because of when I lived there I never see when I saw before yeah and then I come here and I saw, it made me surprise. It's like a Thanksgiving Day, or like Halloween, like this. And I made a lot of my friend and a lot of different culture.

Stephanie: Yeah many different cultures, so what do you miss most about Thailand?

Bo Meh: Actually, I miss my friend. And I left my relatives, and also I miss my food, my culture food.

Stephanie: Which type of food do you miss the most?

Bo Meh: Meat, when we eat the {inaudible}

Stephanie: So what happened that your family decided to come to the United States?

Bo Meh: Because of here is a very good education and also, if we lived there, then we would have a right to have education and also the culture of human right there, then we can't live there. And we decide to move here.

Stephanie: Wow, it's great. How do you see the culture of your family mixing with the culture here in Lowell?

Bo Meh: I think it's not mix anything but according to my parents, they don't know about this culture, but as like me and my sister, we mix some of the like a, we like the American culture.

Stephanie: Do you see your, your customs and your culture is that in your family changing since you've been in America? [pause] Was that confusing the way I said that? Sorry. Um... in what ways have your lifestyle changed for you and your family since you've moved to America? How it's different, how life is different, different for you now?

Bo Meh: It's like, we are just some of the stuff we can't do it and then we know how to. Like set up a computer, we know how to play. Yeah, uh... everything like, I mean, the new, the new that we never seen before. We can do here.

Stephanie: Wow, so computer, using computer was new.

Bo Meh: Because when we lived there, we never seen before.

Stephanie: So you never seen computers in Thailand?

Bo Meh: Because we live in a jungle, like a refugee camp.

Stephanie: What was life like in the refugee camp?

Bo Meh: What was like? It was like people live in bamboo house like that, they mix like tree, I never lived like this.

Stephanie: So um... now that you are in the United States, what are you looking forward to in your future?

Bo Meh: I think when I finish my school, and I prepare to go to college. And I'm interested in nurses program.

Stephanie: Oh wow, so you want to go to the nursing program?

Bo Meh: Yeah, in college.

Stephanie: That's awesome. Good luck with that you're gonna be a great nurse. So um... what is, what's your favorite part about Thailand?

Bo Meh: Uh yeah, my favorite part is the weather. Yeah, because they have three seasons. They rain, I mean summer time, rainy and cold. It's different here. It here is cold.

Stephanie: It is much colder here, a lot of people don't like the cold. Um yeah, what do you like most about living in Lowell?

Bo Meh: This, uh... I like the, I don't know how to say, I like education because it's better here, it's better. And also I like my teacher, and they have a good army.

Stephanie: That's great, thank you. What are some of the cultural traditions what you are proud of from Thailand that you would want to pass on to your children?

Bo Meh: I think part of my Karenni, you never heard of it before?

Stephanie: I haven't heard that, tell me about that.

Bo Meh: Yeah, in Burma they have different, I mean a lot of ethnic group and part of there and it's like Karenni. And I think I'll keep my Karenni tradition to pass my children.

Stephanie: That's great, what was your first impression of the United States when you came here? What did you first think, you know, when you first got off the plane, here you are in this whole new place, what stood out to you? Well, how did you feel? At 17 years old.

Bo Meh: I first, I feel like surprised, yeah, 'cause I never saw before.

Stephanie: What surprised you?

Bo Meh: I saw like building, thin and tall, like this, it's like Boston. And also the river, the Merrimack River. I never saw like this before. And it made me surprised. And also the trees, it's like a change in season and then, I mean the weather.

Stephanie: The weather, the trees change color.

Bo Meh: Yeah, it made me surprised. I love it.

Stephanie: Yeah, and was the snow new to you?

Bo Meh: Uh... it's, I don't like snow.

Stephanie: A lot of people don't.

Bo Meh: Uh... do you like snow?

Stephanie: I love snow and I also don't love snow. I love it because it's fun but it's very cold.

Bo Meh: I like, but I don't like too much.

Stephanie: It's great, well is there anything you'd like to share with our museum so people could listen to your experiences?

Bo Meh: I don't have.

Stephanie: Ok, all set.

(Recording 2)

Stephanie: How do you say hello?

Bo Meh: "Min ga la ba," it means hello.

(Recording 3)

Stephanie: So would you like to share how you came to learn English?

Bo Meh: Uh... uh you mean here, right? Yeah, I learned English here for on more than 2 years, this month. This year will be 2 years. When I lived in Thailand, I don't, I mean, I did learn English. We learn just about hello and how are you. And doesn't mean nothing really here. And I come here and I know a lot of English, a little bit, like this. Not a lot.

Stephanie: What's been the biggest challenge learning English? The spelling or the grammar, or...

Bo Meh: I think it's hard to answer.

Stephanie: What's that?

Bo Meh: It's hard to answer for me.

Stephanie: Ok, that's good.



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RELEASE

I, (Print name) BO Meh, hereby
authorize the University of Massachusetts to record my voice and use my
name and biography for educational activities and as part of the "Mill Girls
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Accepted and agreed to: (Signed) 

Date: June 26 2014

Witnessed by: (signed) Susan Thomson

Date: June 26 2014